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FRIEDRICH DANIEL VON RECKLINGHAUSEN (1833–1910)

Honorary Foreign Member in Class II, Section 4, 1898.

Friedrich Daniel von Recklinghausen, one of the foremost among the German pathologists, distinguished both as a teacher and investigator, was born in Westphalia in 1833. After passing through the gymnasium he studied medicine in the Universities of Bonn, Würzburg, and Berlin, and obtained the doctor degree in 1855. His dissertation and his first medical publication in 1855 was "De pyaemiae theoriis" in which he reviewed and discussed the different theories concerning pyaemia, giving the reasons in favor of its separation from wound infection. His entry into medicine was at the age when men here are graduating from college. He then devoted himself to pathology in the laboratory of Rudolf Virchow and after three semesters in Berlin, and studies in Vienna, Rome, and Paris, he was named an assistant in the pathological institute in Berlin in 1858, holding this position until 1864. In the summer of this year, without passing through the usual stages of Docent and Professor Extraordinary, he was chosen as Professor of Pathological Anatomy in Königsberg, and, after one-half year here, to the higher post in Würzburg. In 1872 he was one of the first professors chosen to the new University founded in Strassburg, where he remained as Professor of General Pathology and Pathological Anatomy until 1906, at which time he became Emeritus. After this he continued to work with his usual diligence in the institute with which his name will always be associated, complaining of the short space of time remaining to him for the completion of his numerous investigations. He was instrumental in having called to the new university such men as Golz, Leyden and Waldyer. In 1877 he constructed the new laboratory of the University, and which at that time was regarded as in all respects a model. In 1883 he functioned as Rector of the University, and in 1884 he refused the call to Leipzig as the successor to Cohnheim. He died suddenly in 1910 in his seventy-seventh year.

Up to 1862 he had published as assistant to Virchow a large number of minor papers on a variety of subjects, some of them involving chemical research. In 1862 appeared the first of the great monographs for which he was distinguished on "Die Lymphgefässe und ihre Beziehungen zum Bindegewebe." In this he first described the method of the use of silver to demonstrate the lines of junction of cells, and showed that the connective tissue was filled with spaces communicating with lymphatics, and in which the cells lie. This work led him to the study of the character of the cells in the tissue, and in a further publication "Über Eiter und Bindegewebs-körperchen" he showed the amoeboid motion of certain of the cells, and their identity with leucocytes and pus cells. This work undoubtedly paved the way to the studies of Cohnheim on leucocyte migration and inflammation, Cohnheim being a young assistant in the laboratory. During his professorship in Würzburg a great number of important publications on pathological anatomical conditions appeared, in one of which "Über Pilzmetastasen" he showed for the first time the relation between metastatic inflammatory foci and masses of bacteria in the blood vessels.

It was during the period in Strassburg that his wonderful activity in scientific research reached its acme. There are few subjects, either in general pathology or in pathological anatomy, which were not advanced through his work. His various researches on the blood, the heart and circulation were followed in 1883 by a large and comprehensive work "Handbuch der Ernährung." This work, which treats of the different forms of disturbances of the circulation and nutrition, is based on his rich experience and his wide knowledge of the literature of the subject, and remains a veritable mine of information for one working on the subject. In 1881 the monograph "Über die multiplen Fibrome der Haut und ihre Beziehung zu den multiplen Neuromen" appeared as a contribution in honor of Rudolf Virchow's twenty-five year jubilee. The article is a classic, showing the relation of the multiple fibromas to the nerves of the skin, and the condition since then has been known as von Recklinghausen's Disease. In 1886 appeared in Virchow's Archives a series of articles "Untersuchungen über Spinabifida" which must be reckoned among the most important contributions of this painstaking and prolific author. The work is based on thorough macro and microscopic investigation of a large amount of material, and the subject, formerly obscure, was completely cleared up.

The peculiar tumors of the uterus and Fallopian tubes, the adenomyomata, are treated in a series of articles between 1893–99. He was especially attracted to the diseases of bones which form, from the complexity of the tissue and the nature of the material, one of the most difficult subjects in pathology. In 1891 he published a large monograph on "Die fibröse oder deformierender Ostitis," a condition which is also known as von Recklinghausen's Disease, and this was followed by a great number of articles on various forms of bone disease and resulting deformities. The last great work, on the subject "Untersuchungen uber Rachitis und Osteomalacie" with 127 illustrations and 41 plates, appeared in 1910, the year of his death.

In addition to the great number of medical publications he found time for several important addresses, he attended medical societies and associations and took part in discussions. He was never controversial, although critical of all that seemed to lack in scientific accuracy. He was equally great as a teacher; many of the men who hold important positions in pathology received their first inspiration and training from him, as Friedländer, Zahn, Schmidt, Köster, Foa, Stilling, Perteck, Aschoff, Murpiergo, Griffini and Sacordotti. His laboratory was sought by both German and foreigners, and there was a constant flow of publications from his students. As a lecturer he was simple and direct, using specimens freely in illustration; his style in writing however was the reverse of simple, and he was difficult to follow. The laboratory was constructed on the cell system, the students were given a small room, a subject for work, and material, and he inculcated independence of observation with simplicity of method. In all of his work he used the simple methods with which he had begun to work, and it is amazing what he was able to do with scalpel, scissors and microscope. When I worked in his laboratory in 1883 there was not a microtome in it, and this instrument had long been regarded as indispensable for microscopic work. Sections were stained with picrocarmine and mounted in glycerine, and he was suspicious of all the newer methods which were coming into use and which have led to enormous advance in knowledge of structure. I found his demonstrations in pathological anatomy, which were held three times in the week, of great interest and value. The students, each with a microscope and a few reagents, were seated at long tables along which the specimens were passed after the professor had explained them, and each student took pieces for study as they went along. The disadvantage of the method was that the progress of the material was so slow that in the two hours of the exercise the specimens rarely reached the last fourth of the class.

Although in his great work on the diseases of the circulation he treated the pathology of function as well as structure, his conclusions are based more on his rich anatomical knowledge than on experimental evidence. He was by nature conservative, and though he welcomed each advance in knowledge, he did not seem to realize the great change in the point of view which came into pathology with the discovery of the methods of bacteriological investigation, although his observations on bacterial emboli are among the fundamental studies in bacteriology. He was essentially a pathological anatomist, his work was based on embryology and the study of stages of processes, as revealed in the abundant material which was at his disposal and of which he made skilful use, rather than on the experimental method. There is a disposition at present to decry all knowledge not based on experiment, but we must remember that there is not a radical difference between the methods of observation and experiment in disease. The anatomical lesions studied are the results of experiments made by nature in which it is true all the conditions are not known and judgment as to their nature mode of production and relations are based on embryology and stages in the process revealed in the differing single examples which arise. Of this method von Recklinghausen was a master, and most of his work has borne the test of time.

He was a tireless worker, arriving at the laboratory at seven in the morning, and often remaining late into the night. His life was quiet, without distraction, and eminently serviceable. Our ideas of German culture have been derived from the work and lives of such men as this.

W. T. COUNCILMAN.

OLIVER CLINTON WENDELL (1845–1912)

Fellow in Class I, Section 1, 1884.

Oliver Clinton Wendell was born at Dover, N. H., on May 7, 1845. After a life largely devoted to astronomical research, he died in Cambridge, Mass., on November 5, 1912.

Mr. Wendell was fitted for college in the old academy of his native town, and graduated from Bates College in 1868. From this college, also, he received the degree of Master of Arts, in 1871, and of Doctor of Science, in 1907. He was one of the comparatively few men who seemed "predestined" to a specific career, for on his graduation it was announced by the President of the college that one of the small class of five was to be an astronomer. This was Wendell, who apparently had come to this decision in his sophomore year. Two months after leaving college he began work at the Harvard College Observatory, but a year later he was compelled to resign his position on account of illness.

For about ten years he found it necessary to engage in outdoor pursuits. During a part of this time he was an assistant to the eminent engineer, James B. Francis, a man to whom he often referred in